

Amendments to the claims

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (currently amended): A sorting conveyor comprising:

a sorting station forming a segment of a conveying line conveying articles in a conveying direction, the sorting station comprising:

a roller-top conveyor belt extending in width laterally from a first side to a second side and traveling in the conveying direction, the roller-top conveyor belt including a plurality of rollers having salient portions protruding outward from an outer surface of the belt to support a conveyed article and capable of being rotated to enable conveyed articles atop the rollers to be diverted ~~divert a conveyed article toward the first or second side of the belt,~~

an elongated guide extending in length from a first end to a second end and suspended above the outer surface of the belt and selectively positionable in a first position traversing the width of the belt to intercept a conveyed article and guide it atop the rollers off the first or second side of the belt and in a second position not intercepting a conveyed article to allow it to continue to advance in the conveying direction, a linear drive disposed at a first location defining a lateral track above the roller-top conveyor belt and traversing the belt, the linear drive having a downwardly extending arm selectively driven along the track, and

wherein the first end of the elongated guide is attached to the arm and the guide is in the first position when the arm is at the first side of the belt and in the second position when the arm is at the second side of the belt.

2. (original): A sorting conveyor as in claim 1 wherein the rollers include axles defining axes in the conveying direction about which the rollers rotate.
3. (original): A sorting conveyor as in claim 1 further comprising a sensor disposed upstream of the sorting station for sensing a predetermined characteristic of a conveyed article to control the position of the elongated guide in the sorting station.
4. (original): A sorting conveyor as in claim 1 wherein the elongated guide is selectively positionable at a third position intercepting a conveyed article and guiding it atop the rollers off the opposite side of the belt as the guide in the first position.
5. (original): A conveyor belt as in claim 4 wherein the guide is selectively positionable at a fourth position not intercepting a conveyed article.
6. (canceled)
7. (canceled)
8. (previously presented): A sorting conveyor as in claim 1 further comprising: a second linear drive disposed at a second location upstream of the first location and defining a lateral track above the roller-top conveyor belt that traverses the belt, the linear drive having a downwardly extending arm selectively driven along the track, and wherein the second end of the elongated guide is attached to the arm and is movable from the first side of the belt to the second side of the belt.
9. (original): A sorting conveyor as in claim 1 wherein the elongated guide includes rotatable elements arranged to engage a conveyed article in rolling contact when the guide is in the first position.
10. (original): A sorting conveyor as in claim 9 wherein the elongated guide includes a conveyor belt segment arranged generally perpendicular to the plane defined by the outer surface of the

roller-top conveyor belt and having roller wheels as the rotatable elements extending outward into rolling contact with a conveyed article.

11. (original): A sorting conveyor as in claim 1 wherein the guide includes one or more elastic elements to adjust the length of the guide between the first and second positions.
12. (original): A sorting conveyor as in claim 11 wherein at least one of the elastic elements is at the first end of the elongated guide.
13. (original): A sorting conveyor as in claim 1 wherein the sorting station further comprises a lift for lifting the guide into the second position high enough above the outer surface of the roller-top belt to avoid intercepting a conveyed article.
14. (currently amended): A sorting conveyor comprising:
a sorting station forming a segment of a conveying line conveying articles in a conveying direction, the sorting station comprising:
a roller-top conveyor belt extending in width laterally from a first side to a second side and traveling in the conveying direction, the roller-top conveyor belt including a plurality of rollers having salient portions protruding outward from an outer surface of the belt to support a conveyed article and capable of being rotated to enable a conveyed article atop the rollers to be diverted ~~divert a conveyed article toward the first or second side of the belt~~,
an elongated guide extending in length from a first end to a second end and suspended above the outer surface of the belt and selectively positionable in a first position traversing the width of the belt to intercept a conveyed article and guide it atop the rollers off the first or second side of the belt and in a second position not intercepting a conveyed article to allow it to continue to advance in the conveying direction,

a rotational drive disposed above the roller-top conveyor belt, the rotational drive having a downwardly extending rotatable pivot shaft defining a pivot axis intersecting the belt generally midway across the width of the belt, wherein the pivot shaft is attached to the elongated guide generally midway between the first end and the second end to selectively rotate the elongated guide between the first position at an angle relative to the conveying direction to divert a conveyed article off the first side of the belt and a third position at a different angle relative to the conveying direction to divert an article off the second side of the belt.

15. (original): A sorting conveyor as in claim 14 wherein the angle of the guide in the first position differs from the different angle of the guide in the second position by about 90°.

16. (original): A sorting conveyor as in claim 1 wherein the elongated guide is linear.

17. (currently amended): A sorting conveyor comprising:

 a sorting station forming a segment of a conveying line conveying articles in a conveying direction, the sorting station comprising:
 a roller-top conveyor belt extending in width laterally from a first side to a second side and traveling in the conveying direction, the roller-top conveyor belt including a plurality of rollers protruding outward of a horizontal upper surface of the belt to support a conveyed article and arranged to rotate about axes generally in the conveying direction,

 an elongated guide forming a generally vertical wall extending in length from a first end to a second end and suspended above the upper surface of the belt and selectively positionable in one or more blocking orientations crossing the belt from the first side to the second side to intercept a conveyed article and guide it atop the rollers off the

first or second side of the belt and in one or more non-blocking orientations not intercepting a conveyed article to allow it to continue to advance in the conveying direction,

wherein the elongated guide includes roller wheels having low-friction surfaces extending from the wall and rotatable about vertical axes to engage a conveyed article in low-friction rolling contact; and

a sensor disposed upstream of the sorting station for sensing a predetermined characteristic of a conveyed article to activate the drive to selectively orient the elongated guide in the sorting station.

18. (canceled)

19. (original): A sorting conveyor as in claim 17 wherein the elongated guide includes elastic elements to adjust its length.

20. (original): A sorting conveyor as in claim 17 wherein the sorting station comprises a drive disposed above the conveyor belt and coupled to the elongated guide to position the wall across the upper surface of the belt at one or more angles relative to the conveying direction.

21. (original): A sorting conveyor as in claim 20 wherein the drive positions the wall at a first angle oblique to the conveying direction and at a second angle mirroring the first angle about the centerline of the belt.

22. (original): A sorting conveyor as in claim 20 wherein the drive rotates the guide about its midpoint.

23. (original): A sorting conveyor as in claim 20 wherein the drive includes a first linear drive having a moving element selectively shuttling laterally across the belt, the moving element

being attached to the first end of the guide to translate the first end of the guide laterally between the first and second sides of the belt.

24. (original): A sorting conveyor as in claim 23 whercin the drive includes a second linear drive disposed upstream of the first linear drive and having a moving element selectively shuttling laterally across the belt, the moving element being attached to the second end of the guide to translate the second end of the guide laterally between the first and second sides of the belt.

25. (original): A sorting conveyor as in claim 17 wherein the sorting station further comprises a lift connected to the guide for lifting the guide above the upper surface of the roller-top belt into a non-blocking orientation and lowering the guide into a blocking orientation.

26. (canceled)

27. (canceled)

28. (currently amended): A sorting conveyor comprising:

a bidirectional sorting station forming a segment of a conveying line conveying articles in a conveying direction, the sorting station comprising:
a roller-top conveyor belt extending in width laterally from a first side to a second side and traveling in the conveying direction, the roller-top conveyor belt including a plurality of rollers having salient portions protruding outward from an outer surface of the belt to support a conveyed article and mounted on axles retained in the conveyor belt generally in the conveying direction, enabling the rollers to be rotated to enable a conveyed article atop the rollers to be diverted toward the first or second side of the belt,

first and second exit conveyors abutting the belt at the first and second sides, respectively, for receiving conveyed articles diverted off the first and second sides of the belt,

an elongated guide extending in length from a first end to a second end and suspended above the outer surface of the belt and selectively positionable in:

a first diverting position traversing the width of the belt with the first end of the guide at the first side of the belt and the second end of the guide at the second side of the belt and downstream of the first end to intercept a conveyed article and guide it atop the rollers off the second side of the belt onto the second exit conveyor,

a second diverting position traversing the width of the belt with the first end of the guide at the second side of the belt and the second end of the guide at the first side of the belt and downstream of the first end to intercept a conveyed article and guide it atop the rollers off the first side of the belt onto the first exit conveyor,

and a bypass position not intercepting a conveyed article to allow it to continue to advance in the conveying direction past the sorting station.